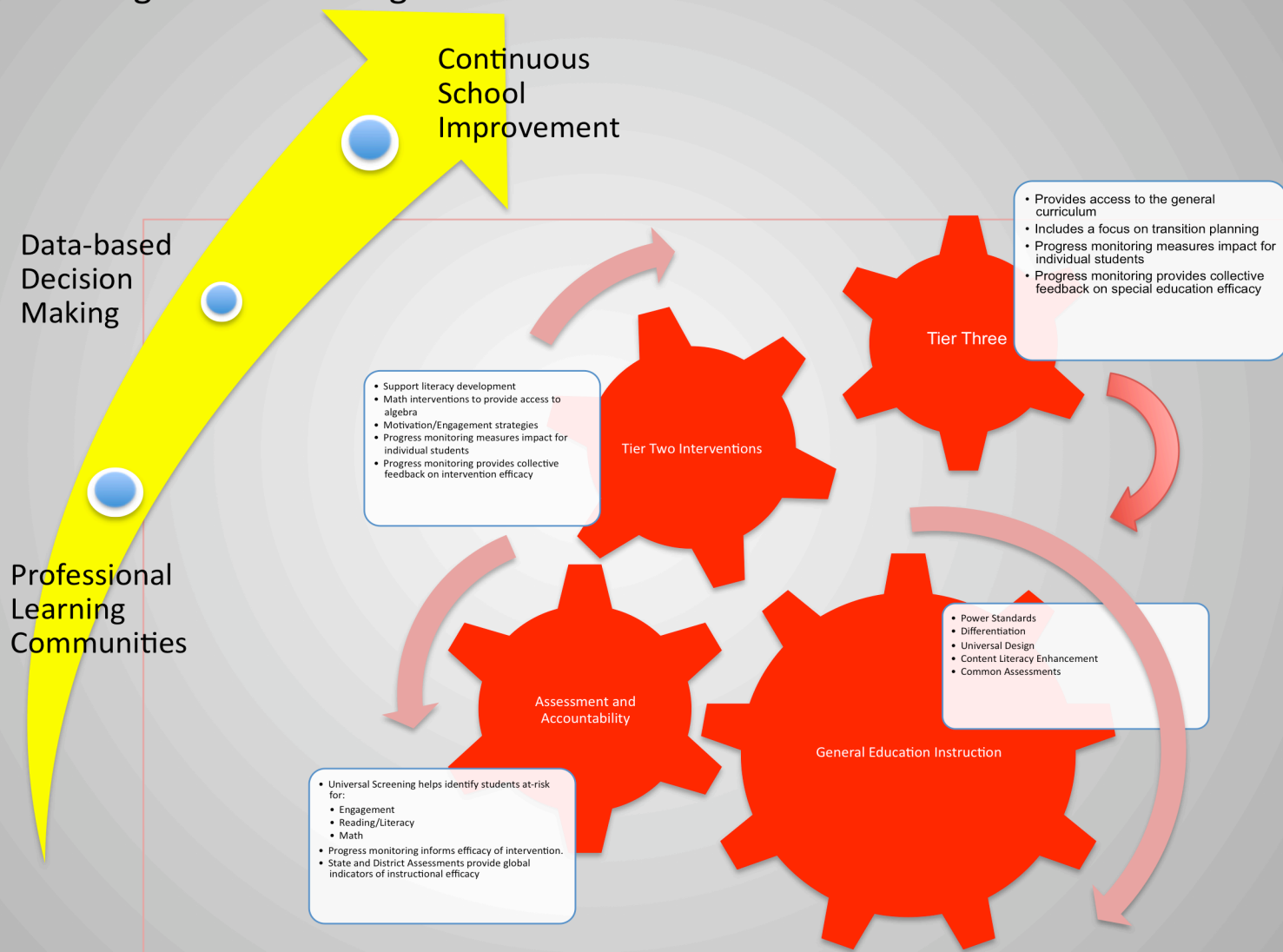# RTI & SLD Eligibility

Evelyn Johnson, Ed.D.

3 perspectives

- RTI only

- Cognitive Hypothesis Testing

- Blended model ***

Figure 1.3 An integrated model of RTI

Continuous School Improvement

Data-based Decision Making

Professional Learning Communities

Tier Three
- Provides access to the general curriculum
- Includes a focus on transition planning
- Progress monitoring measures impact for individual students
- Progress monitoring provides collective feedback on special education efficacy

Tier Two Interventions
- Support literacy development
- Math interventions to provide access to algebra
- Motivation/Engagement strategies
- Progress monitoring measures impact for individual students
- Progress monitoring provides collective feedback on intervention efficacy

Assessment and Accountability
- Universal Screening helps identify students at-risk for:
  - Engagement
  - Reading/Literacy
  - Math
- Progress monitoring informs efficacy of intervention.
- State and District Assessments provide global indicators of instructional efficacy

General Education Instruction
- Power Standards
- Differentiation
- Universal Design
- Content Literacy Enhancement
- Common Assessments

SLD Definition

- A specific learning disability means a **disorder** in one or more of the **basic psychological processes** involved in understanding or in using language, spoken or written, which may manifest itself in an imperfect ability to listen, think, speak, read, write, spell, or to do mathematical calculations, *including conditions such as perceptual disabilities, brain injury, minimal brain dysfunction, dyslexia, and developmental aphasia*. Specific learning disability **does not include** learning problems that are primarily the result of visual, hearing, or motor disabilities, of mental retardation, of emotional disturbance, or of environmental, cultural, or economic disadvantage. (34 CFR Sec. 300.8 (c)(10))

Why is it so hard to diagnose?
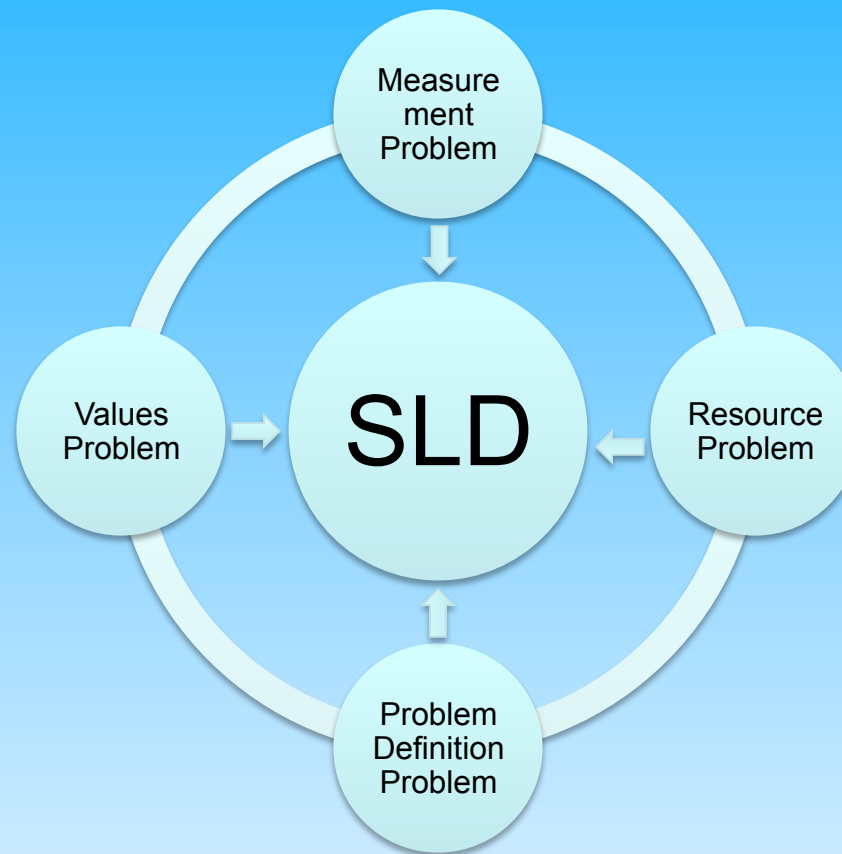
Measurement Problem

- Heterogeneity of SLD precludes the use of standard score cutoffs/differences
- Reliance on local/state norms means that SLD may be location dependent?
- Direct observation of the SLD is not possible – it is observed through measures designed to elicit a behavior
- Traditionally has relied on single point in time approach

Resource Problem

- Special Education services are often the only way to provide focused intervention and support to struggling learners
- But….overidentification means we water down services to students who truly need them

Competing Values Problem*

- General ed teacher might want student removed from class

- Administrators want efficient approach.

- School psychologists want a reliable & valid approach

- Special education teachers want expedient & reliable approach

- Parents want services

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Problem Definition

- What is the purpose of classification?
  - Identification?
  - Intervention?
  - Research?
  - Entitlements?

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Purpose of Classification

1   Identification – the first step in solving a problem is to define it and understand its nature

2   Intervention Planning & Entitlements

Definition   Criteria   Method

Definition	Criteria	Method
1. Disorder in psychological process	1. Cognitive Processing Deficit	1. Assessment of process related to academic area of deficit
2. Imperfect ability to learn	2. Progress Monitoring & Achievement Data	2. RTI & Achievement tests
3. Does not include problems due to other causes	3. Observation, data to confirm appropriate instruction, exclusionary criteria	3. Observation, RTI, consideration of other factors

How RTI informs the Eligibility Process
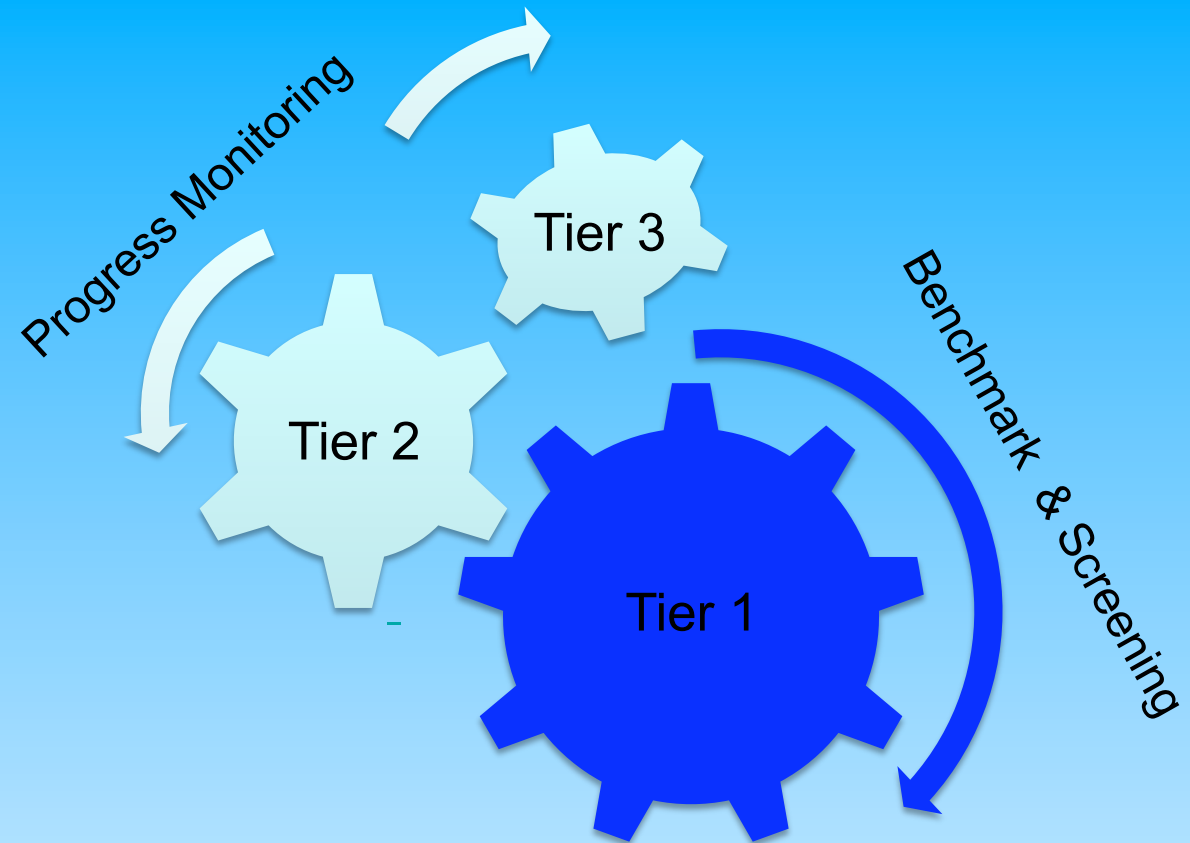
Ensure a Solid Tier One Program

Tier 1 consists of: A core instructional program

Benchmarking 3 x's per year

Professional Development
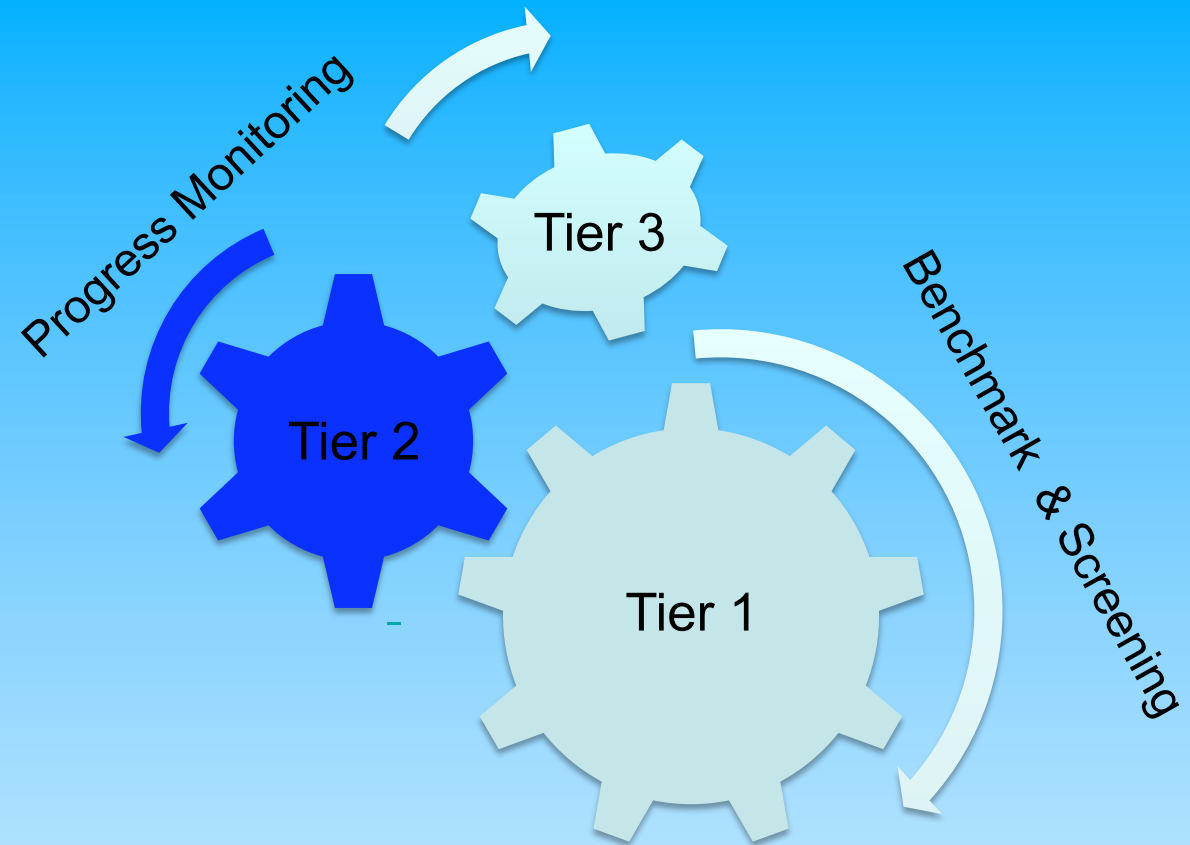
First Marker – Relative Low Achievement

ISAT

Grades

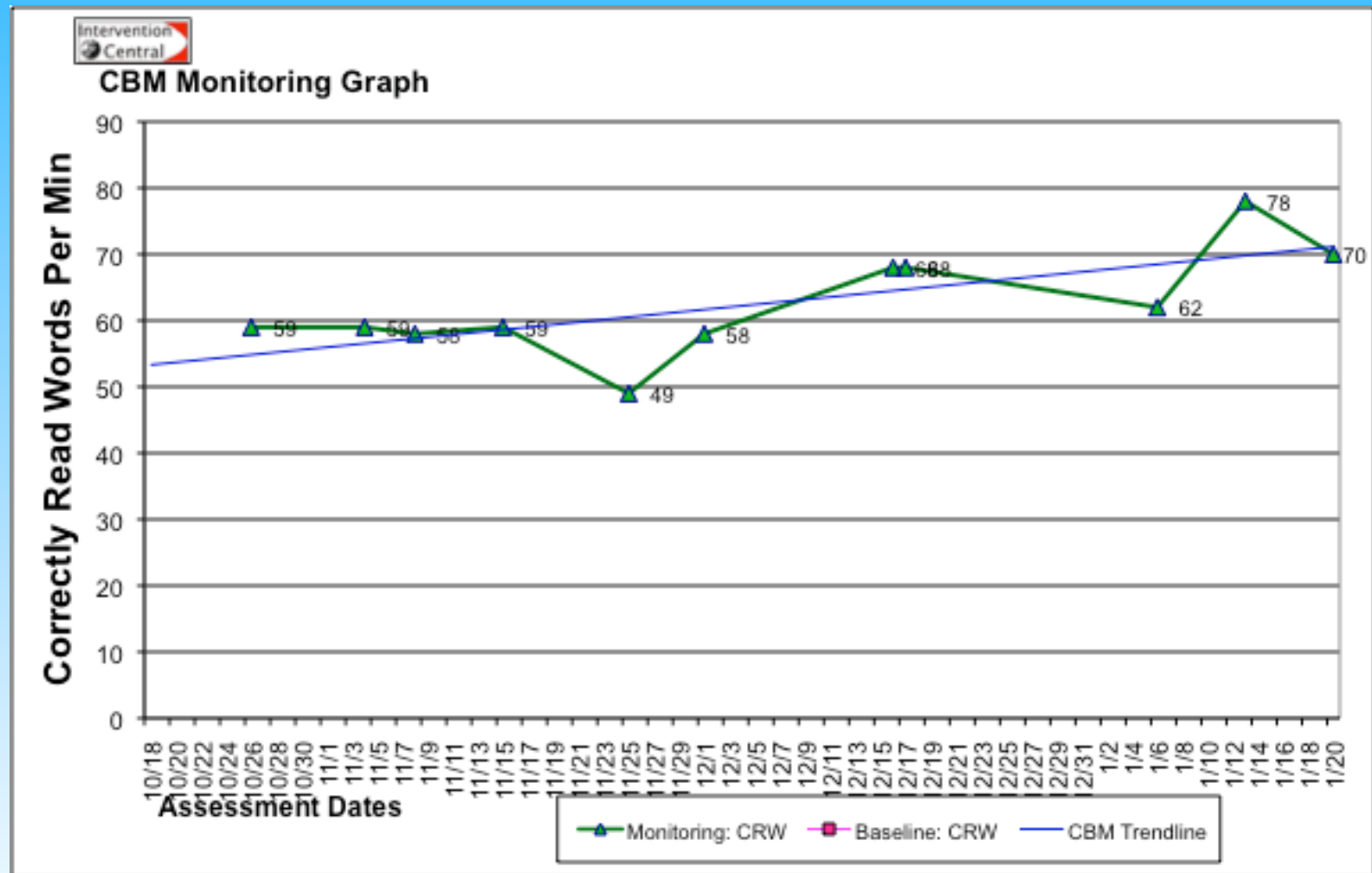Common Assessments

Observation

Work Samples

Performance Benchmarks

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Progress Monitoring

Benchmark & Screening

Tier 3

Tier 2

Tier 1

Provide Intervention

Tier 2 consists of: Evidence based, small group, targeted
intervention

Progress Monitoring

2nd Marker – Lack of Progress

2nd Marker – Lack of Progress

Grades

PM data

Observation

Work Samples

Performance Benchmarks

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ARE WE READY FOR TIER 3?

NOT YET

Definition   Criteria   Method

Definition	Criteria	Method
1. Disorder in psychological process 2. Imperfect ability to learn 3. Does not include problems due to other causes	1. Cognitive Processing Deficit 2. Progress Monitoring & Achievement Data 3. Observation, data to confirm appropriate instruction, exclusionary criteria	1. Assessment of process related to academic area of deficit 2. RTI & Achievement tests 3. Observation, RTI, consideration of other factors

RTI

What it tells us

- Rules out 'instructional disability'
- Provides early intervening support for students previously not eligible for other services
- Tells us the student does not respond to generally effective instruction & intervention

But we still need to know

- _Why_ doesn't this student respond?
- _What_ individualized instruction should we try now?

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Measures of Achievement

What we have so far

- Performance data on local measures
- Performance data relative to peers

What we still need

- Performance data on standardized measures with national norms

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If performance is only measured using local norms and relative peer performance, a student may be identified as LD in one class but not in another? Is SLD a within child deficit or an environmental condition?

STANDARDIZED MEASURES OF ACHIEVEMENT: WHY WE NEED THEM

Psychological Processes

- Related to the area of academic deficit
  - In reading, phonological processing, processing speed (rapid automatized naming), orthographic coding, basic auditory and visual perception skills, semantic & oral language processing
  - In math, the research is less well defined, but working memory, processing speed, number sense, visual perception and attention skills are emerging as important underlying processes

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Research on Processing Differences

- Meta-analyses & research show that students with learning disabilities in general have processing deficits related to the area of academic difficulty
  - Swanson & Colleagues
  - Berninger & Colleagues
  - Pennington & Colleagues
  - Shaywitz & Colleagues
  - Flanagan & Colleagues

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Psychological Processes

Assist in Identification

- Phonological Processing
- Working Memory

Assist in Intervention Planning

- Numerous research based interventions target phonological processing deficits, especially for young children
- Students with memory issues need structure, repetition, summarization strategies

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Psychological Processes

- What is the role of IQ?
  - Sufficient evidence shows the discrepancy model is not valid
  - But, does this mean that IQ is not important?

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The Role of IQ

- Meta-analyses examining the effect of instruction shows that verbal IQ moderates the size of the effect - students with low achievement but higher IQs (above 90) have lower effect sizes than students with low achievement and lower IQs

Exclusionary Criteria

- Rule out:
  - visual, hearing, or motor disabilities,
  - Cognitive impairment,
  - Emotional disturbance,
  - Environmental, cultural, or economic disadvantage

Exclusionary Criteria

- RTI helps us here too!
    - Environmental, cultural, or economic disadvantage – through the use of an RTI process (as described previously) we collect data that although a student has been provided with appropriate instructional experiences, they have not responded

Are We at Tier 3 Yet?

- Evidence of low achievement (confirmed)
- Evidence of inadequate response to intervention
- Evidence of processing deficit (and possibly a pattern of strengths & weaknesses)
- Aptitude in the average range
- Ruled out exclusionary criteria

Why isn't there a formula?

- Heterogeneity of SLD

- Though evidence suggests that students with SLD typically have:
  - IQs in the high average range (>90)
  - Achievement < 25th percentile
  - Response slopes that are below norms
  - Processing deficits about 1 SD below mean

  The evidence is not sufficient to recommend hard cut scores

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A single picture doesn't tell the whole story

But a photo album can

Thank You!

- Questions?